

What's New?

Essays on Educator Compensation Reform

Former Chancellor of New York City schools, Joel Klein, writes on “The Failure of American Schools” in the June 2011 edition of *The Atlantic* magazine.

In the essay, Klein writes that in the three decades after *A Nation at Risk*, the United States public school system has made only negligible improvements. Citing low graduation rates and poor performance on international rankings in both mathematics and science education, Klein writes that we are “rapidly moving toward two Americas—a wealthy elite, and an increasingly large underclass that lacks the skills to succeed.”

Citing teacher tenure and compensation as a driving challenge in the system and using examples from his tenure in New York City, Klein provides success stories from individual schools to make the claim that having effective teachers in the classroom is the most significant factor in increasing student performance.

Klein also points to recent federal policy development through Race to the Top and the Common Core State Standards movement as hopeful developments. However, Klein goes on to suggest that the country needs to do the following and provides a rationale for each:

- “Rebuild our entire K–12 system on a platform of accountability.”
- “Attract more top-flight recruits into teaching.”
- “Use technology very differently to improve instruction.”

The full essay is available online at <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/06/the-failure-of-american-schools/8497/>.

Andrew Rotherham, cofounder and partner at Bellwether Education, a nonprofit organization, and cofounder and former codirector of Education Sector,

wrote an essay titled “Better Teachers: More Questions Than Answers” for *Time Magazine* in April 2011. The full essay is available online at <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2066577,00.html>.

The National Bureau of Economic Research published a working paper in March 2011 on teacher evaluation titled *The Effect of Evaluation on Performance: Evidence From Longitudinal Student Achievement Data of Mid-Career Teachers*. The researchers studied the effect of evaluations on employee performance using data from Cincinnati Public Schools and to its teacher evaluation system. The researchers found that an evaluation system based on quality classroom observations and other performance measures can improve performance in mid-career teachers both during the period of evaluation and in the years following. This evidence may support the recent policy focus of many districts on improving the effectiveness of human capital management. The report is available online at <http://www.nber.org/papers/w16877.pdf>.

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Hot Off the Press

Indiana Education Package Bears Conservative Stamp—*Education Week*. May 12, 2011

http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2011/05/12/31_indiana.h30.html (subscription required)

The Indiana legislature voted on five new education bills during the 2011 session. Senate Bill One requires school districts to develop new teacher evaluation systems that include student achievement gains. Educator evaluations will inform salary, seniority, and tenure decisions.

Norfolk Opts Not to Pursue Bonus Plan for Teachers—*The Virginian-Pilot*. May 12, 2011

<http://hamptonroads.com/2011/05/norfolk-opts-not-pursue-bonus-plan-teachers>

The Norfolk, Virginia, school board voted against participating in a performance-based compensation program pilot run by the state. The superintendent indicated that he was not opposed to the idea of performance pay in theory but reported that the board did not have enough time to prepare an application for the deadline set by the state and did not foresee program sustainability after the expenditure of state funds.

WCPS Designing Incentive Program for Teachers, Principals at Low-Income Schools—*Herald-Mail*. May 7, 2011

<http://www.herald-mail.com/news/hm-wcps-considering-incentive-program-for-teachers-at-lowincome-schools-20110507,0,7542413.story?page=2>

Washington County Public Schools in Maryland plan to implement a pilot performance-based compensation program for teachers and principals at five schools as a part of the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) program. Teachers and principals will be eligible for awards of \$2,500 or \$5,000, depending on their effectiveness ratings.

Teachers Generally Satisfied, Tennessee Survey Finds—*The Commercial Appeal*. May 5, 2011

<http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/2011/may/05/teachers-generally-satisfied/>

Survey results from teachers in Tennessee (77 percent response rate statewide) find that four out of five teachers want to continue teaching in their current schools, and 87 percent report receiving adequate support from administrators. Only 52 percent, however, say they receive state test data in time to change their instruction.

Grantee Spotlight

Houston Independent School District: Project ASPIRE

The Houston Independent School District (HISD) Project ASPIRE—which stands for Accelerating Student Progress. Increasing Results & Expectations—is a performance-based compensation system for teachers. Project ASPIRE is a districtwide program, funded by state and local money, and supplemented by TIF Cohort 1 and Cohort 3 funds. Project ASPIRE focuses on a demonstration of teacher effectiveness and growth in student learning at both the campus and individual teacher levels. The TIF Cohort 3 funding expands ASPIRE to an additional 130 schools in HISD and provides incentives to teachers, principals, assistant principals, and deans of instruction.

Primary Components of the Program

Teachers in both tested and nontested grades and subjects are eligible to earn awards, based on student growth. Teachers in tested grades and subjects are eligible to earn awards based on a comparison of their individual teacher value-added scores to a district reference gain score and to the growth of all other classroom teachers in the same category of grades and/or subjects. Teachers in nontested grades and subjects earn awards based on schoolwide value-added results. **Principals and Assistant Principals** earn an award based on a comparison of the school's value-added analysis of student academic progress to that of similar schools in the district.

HISD plans to use teacher and department-level value-added analysis information as an initial step to identify highly effective teachers. The district will create career pathways for highly effective teachers using differentiated human capital development strategies, such as leadership roles for teachers.

In addition, HISD has designed and implemented a new staff review process to assess the current effectiveness of each teacher in the district as a first step toward establishing an ongoing system to retain top performers and provide specific feedback and targeted supports to teachers so they can help their students be successful. Principals will group their teachers into one of four categories: highly effective, proficient, developing, and low performing. After identifying teacher needs, principals will work with a team to determine professional development and supports offered based on individual teacher strengths and challenges.

Program Goals

Project ASPIRE strives to achieve the following goals:

- Increase teacher and principal effectiveness.
- Improve student achievement and close achievement gaps, supported by increased teacher and principal effectiveness.
- Reform teacher and principal appraisal and compensation systems so that teachers and principals earn rewards for increases in student achievement.

- Increase the number of effective teachers teaching poor, minority, and disadvantaged students in hard-to-staff subjects such as mathematics and science.

Program Incentives

Project ASPIRE awards performance-based compensation to instructional staff based on student growth and achievement data using the Education Value Added Assessment System (EVAAS) developed by SAS at the classroom and schoolwide levels. The following table outlines the TIF-funded awards for which teachers, principals, assistant principals, and other instructional staff are eligible.

HISD TIF-Funded Awards		
All Teachers	Campus Composite Value Added	Up to \$1,000
Core Foundation Teachers	Individual Classroom Value Added	Up to \$2,00
Assistant Principals and Principal	Campus Composite Value Added	Up to \$500
Assistant Principals and Principals	Core Subject Value Added	Up to \$2,500

Note: Teachers, assistant principals, and principals are eligible to receive additional locally and state-funded incentives for possible total awards of \$10,300, \$7,765, and \$15,530, respectively.

Recent Highlights of the Program

HISD informs stakeholders of Project ASPIRE efforts through a variety of communication vehicles, including the publication *A Guide for Parents and Families to Value-Added Progress and Measures & ASPIRE Awards*, as well as community access to the *District Value-Added Reports*, *School Value-Added Progress Reports*, and *Value-Added Summary Reports*. In addition, HISD hosts ASPIRE Community Forums to educate parents, families, and community members about the program.

For more information about HISD TIF and Project ASPIRE, visit the program website at <http://portal.battelleforkids.org/ASPIRE/Home.html?sflang=en>.

Contact Us



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The Center for Educator Compensation Reform (CECR) was awarded to Westat — in partnership with Learning Point Associates, Synergy Enterprises Inc., Vanderbilt University, and the University of Wisconsin — by the U.S. Department of Education in October 2006.

The primary purpose of CECR is to support Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grantees in their implementation efforts through provision of sustained technical assistance and development and dissemination of timely resources. CECR also is charged with raising national awareness of alternative and effective strategies for educator compensation through a newsletter, a Web-based clearinghouse, and other outreach activities.

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